

WHOLEHEARTED RELIGION NO. 1623

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 9, 1881,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*"And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever,
for the good of them, and of their children after them."
Jeremiah 32:39.*

THOSE of you who were present last Lord's-Day morning will remember my sermon upon "Mongrel Religion," [Sermon #1622] in which I dealt with those who feared the Lord and served other gods. Their heart was divided, and therefore, they were found faulty. They had, as the Hebrew puts it, a heart and a heart—a heart that went this way, and a heart that went the other way. And so, as a matter of fact, they became, as the prophet says, as "a silly dove that has no heart." The discourse of this morning is intended to exhibit wholehearted religion which is the opposite of the sad mixture which we have so lately denounced. We wish to look upon persons of Caleb's stamp, who followed the Lord fully—in whom, by the grace of God, the divided heart has become united—so that with their whole heart they serve the Lord their God.

Our text is an extract from Jeremiah's copy of the covenant of grace. The Lord promises to Israel, "They shall be My people, and I will be their God." And in the 40th verse He says, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." This, then, is the covenant of grace which God has made with His people and it is highly suggestive that the first blessing of it relates to the *heart*, for God, when He begins with men, does not begin with the outward way, but with the inward spirit. He puts it, "I will give them one heart and one way"—the *way* is second—the heart comes first. Understand, then, that in all true godliness we must begin with heart-work. It is no use hoping to polish the outside until, by degrees, you enlighten the interior. No, but the light must first be placed within and then, as it shines through, spots on the exterior will be discovered and will all the more readily be cleansed away. God works not *to* the center, but *in* the center, and then from the center into the outer life. In reference to the heart, one of the earliest works of divine grace is to unite it in one. Strange to say, but I would be equally truthful if I said that one of the first works of grace is to *break* the heart—but so paradoxical is man that when his heart is unbroken, it is divided—and when his heart is broken, then, for the first time, it is united, for a broken heart, in every fragment of it, mourns over sin and cries out for mercy.

Every shattered particle of a contrite spirit is united in one desire to be reconciled to God. There is no union of the heart with itself till it is broken for sin and from sin. Early in the morning of grace, the man comes to himself and is restored to the unity of his manhood. The effect of this inner reunion is very salutary. We read of the prodigal, that, "when he came to himself," he said, "I will arise and go to my father." The heart is united in itself when it is united to the Lord! Even as the Lord has said by the mouth of the prophet, "I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto Me with their whole heart." It is of this unitedness of heart that I shall speak first. And then I shall go on to those other covenant blessings which come after it, according to the text. These are placed *after* it, in order to show its great value, since it is the first step to exceedingly precious blessings.

First, then, we will consider unitedness of heart—"I will give them one heart." Secondly, the blessing which immediately arises out of it, consistency of walk—"I will give them one way." From these two come the third blessing, "steadfastness of principle, "that they may fear Me forever." And consequent upon all this comes personal blessings, "for the good of them," and attendant upon that favor, rela-

tive benediction—"and for the good of their children after them." Our program is very extensive—may the Spirit of God help us to fill it up.

I. We begin, then, at the beginning, with UNITEDNESS OF THE HEART. Our first statement under this head shall be that it is naturally divided. Sin is confusion and at its entrance it created Babel, or confusion within the heart of man. Until man sinned, his nature was one and undivided, but the Fall broke him and destroyed his unity. Within him, now, there are many voices, many imaginations and many devices. Within him there is strife and contention, wars and fights, which come of his lusts, which struggle with each other and with his understanding. Observe the contest which is constantly visible between his conscience and his affections. His affections choose that which is evil, while his conscience approves that which is right. The desires go after that which appears to be pleasant, but the judgment warns the mind of its folly and, therefore, a controversy between the two powers of the soul. The lusts crave for that which the intellect condemns; the passions demand that which the reason would deny; the will persists in that which the judgment would forego! The ship of our manhood will not obey the helm; there is a mutiny on board and those powers which should be underlings, strive for the mastery. Man is dragged to and fro by contending forces; conscience draws this way and the affections drag in the opposite direction. Our propensities and faculties are, by nature, like the crowd in the Ephesian theater of whom we read, "Some, therefore, cried one thing, and some another; for the assembly was confused."

We sin not without some measure of compunction and we do not quit our sin, thoroughly, even when we yield to conscience, for the heart still hankers after that which the conscience disallows. To many a man it is given to admire things that are excellent and still to delight in things which are abominable! His conscience bids him rise to a pure and noble life, but his baser passions hold him down to that which is earthly and sensual. Frequently, too, there is a very great division between a man's inward knowledge and his outward conduct. Men are often wise in the head and foolish in the hand—they know the right and do the wrong! The law of God is read in their hearing and written upon their memories and yet it is forgotten in their lives. They are men of great discernment in theory and yet in their actions they put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter; darkness for light and light for darkness! They sin against the light of God—"They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Often and often the man is as right as Justice, herself, in his opinions, and clear as the day in his information—and yet he gropes as the blind and stumbles at noonday as in the night! His knowledge goes one way and his will another. He knows the consequences of sin, and therefore fears! He perceives the pleasureableness or profit of sin, and therefore presumes! He is sure that he will never be so base as to fall into a certain fault, but, by-and-by, he rushes into it and defends himself for so doing, till he changes his fickle mind—and then he denounces that which just now he allowed! How can he be right with God when he is not even right with himself?

All through the carnal man, if you look at him, there is confusion and mischief! We would call that creature a monster which had its head towards the earth and its feet towards heaven—and yet the carnal man lives in that position! He ought to tread the world beneath his feet, but he places it above—while the heaven to which he should aspire, he daily spurns! He lets his animal passions, which should be treated as the dogs of his flock, become his lords and masters. He reverses the order of nature and bids the beast within him to have dominion over the spirit. Appetites, which in their way are good if they are kept in with bit and bridle, are permitted to become evil because they have unlimited indulgence and are allowed to be the tyrants of the soul! The Ishmael of the flesh mocks the Isaac of the conscience and is unreproved! Solomon said, "I have seen servants upon horses and princes walking as servants upon the earth." And the same may be seen in the little world within where appetites rule and grander capacities are placed in servitude.

Man is a puzzle and none can put him together but He that made him at the first. He is a self-contradiction, a house divided against itself, a mystery of iniquity, a maze of folly, a mass of perversity, obstinacy and contention! Sin has made the heart to be so inwardly divided as to be like the troubled sea which cannot rest, or like a cage of unclean birds—every one fighting its fellow—or like a den of wild beasts which cease not to rend each other. When man cast off the yoke of the one God, he fell under bondage to many gods and many lords who struggle for supremacy and make the one kingdom into many rival principalities. Since sin became natural to man, it became natural that man's heart should be

divided. But it must be united; that is the point, and therefore the covenant promise, “I will give them one heart,” for, dear friends, in the matters of godliness, if our heart is not whole and entire in following after God, we cannot meet with acceptance. God never did and never will receive the homage of a divided heart! Alexander, when Darius proposed that the two great monarchs should divide the world, replied that there was only room for one sun in the heavens. What his ambition affirmed, God declares from the necessity of the case. Since one God fills all things, there is no room for another! It is not possible for a heart to be given up to falsehood and yet to be under the power of truth! It is idle to attempt to serve two such masters as holiness and iniquity.

God cannot smile upon an unhallowed compromise and allow men to bow in the house of Rimmon and yet worship in His holy temple. God will have all or nothing—He will have us only, wholly, altogether and always His or else He will have nothing to do with us! False gods can bear a divided empire, but the true God cannot have it. You may assemble a parliament of idols, but Jehovah says, “I am God alone.” It was once proposed to the Roman senate to set up the image of Christ in the Pantheon among the gods, but when they were informed that He would not agree that any worship should be mingled with His own, the senate straightway refused Him a shrine. In this they acted in a manner consistent with itself—but those are altogether inexcusable who swear by the Lord and swear by Malcham! We provoke the Lord to jealousy when we offer Him a corner in our souls and allow our vain thoughts to lodge within us. Errors can lie down like sheep in a field, but no error can lie side by side with the lordly lion of the truth of God! There is no god but God. Jehovah, He is God! There is one Mediator between God and man—the Man Christ Jesus. Whatever a man sets up in his heart as the object of his affections in opposition to God is a vain, a vile, a vicious thing—and that man cannot be accepted of the Lord! Would you, then, serve God, O man? Him only must you serve. Would you bring unto Him an offering? You must first give Him your *heart*—your undivided heart. He cries, “My son, give Me your heart,” and He says not, “Give Me a *share* of it.” He will not call that house His temple where other things are worshipped as well as Himself. Abhorrence, not acceptance, shall fall to the lot of that man who is half-hearted with God! And is not this as it should be? Does not the love of Jesus deserve our wholehearted love in return? His love, which made Him become man, deserves man’s entire homage! His love which led Him to the cross deserves that we be crucified to the world for His sake! His love to death demands that we be dead to sin for His sake! His love which now rules all heaven for our sakes deserves our soul, our life, our all. He gave Himself for us—His whole self—and we must give our whole hearts to Him.

In the chapter before us the Lord says, “Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul.” Shall we give half a heart to our wholehearted God? Shall we be double-minded when He is so intense in blessing us? Shall we love the world and hope to have the love of the Father in us at the same time? God will not have it and we do not wish it. The heart must be united! We have seen that it must be united for acceptance. We now note that it must be united for sincerity—a divided heart is a false heart. Where there is no unity of heart there is no truth in the spirit. Tell me that you love the world and I will tell you that the love of the world is enmity to God! Declare that you will serve Belial ever so little and I know that your service to Christ is but Judas’ service—mercenary, temporary, traitorous! Sincerity does not open the front door to Christ and the back gate to the devil.

Our heart must be united, next, for intensity of life. True religion needs the soul to be always at a fervent heat. “The kingdom of heaven,” says our Lord, “suffers violence and the violent take it by force.” None climb the hill whereon the New Jerusalem is built except such as go on hands and knees and, laying aside every weight, give themselves wholly to the divine ascent. The pilgrim who hopes to reach the better land and makes a pleasure trip of it is under a mistake—it is hard traveling and requires ardor and perseverance. It is so in every good word and work. A lazy prayer requests a denial and shall have it. Half-hearted praise is an insult to God and everything in religion that is not done with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength—is a sin—however much it may look like a virtue! When we are most intense, we do not come up to the zeal which these important things deserve—how can we, then, imagine that we can please God with less than our best? Know you not that our Lord has said, “Because you are lukewarm, I will spue you out of My mouth”? No stronger expression of disgust can possibly be used, and this disgust is not for the bold and hardened rebel, but for the *moderate* disciple

who served God without fail, but without zeal! God loves a whole heart, but half a heart is His abhorrence. Only those who run with all their might will win the race and, as the man of divided heart is lame in both his feet, he can have no hope of the prize. Lord, make my heart one that I may give it all to You, and spend and be spent in Your one service, since You, only, are the one in whom my soul delights!

The heart must be united to be consecrated. Will God be served with broken cups and cracked flagons? And shall His altars be polluted with torn and mangled sacrifices? All the things in heaven and earth which the Lord acknowledges as consecrated things are dedicated to Him and to Him alone. Can you imagine that within the holy place there would be an altar, part of which was used for sacrifices offered to Jehovah—and another portion for victims presented to Molech? The idea cannot be endured! The Lord said of old to Ezekiel, “Son of man, the place of My throne, and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever, and My holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, in their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their posts by My posts.” God will not account that to be consecrated to Himself which is used by another. Brethren, we must be wholly consecrated unto the Lord, or we cannot be consecrated to Him at all! We are unconsecrated; we are polluted; and we are as things accursed if we are divided in heart!

Once more, we must have our heart united or else none of the blessings which are to follow in covenant order can possibly reach us. For, look, “I will give them one heart.” And then it follows, “one way”—no man will have a consistent, uniform way while he has a divided heart! Read next, “That they shall fear Me forever.” But no man will fear God forever unless fear has taken possession of his whole heart! The convert may profess to follow the Lord for a while, but he will soon turn aside. He who does not begin with his whole heart will soon tire of the race. “Forever” is a long day and requires our whole soul to hold on and to hold out! The Lord also promises that this shall be “for the good of them, and of their children after them.” But those who give God a *part* of their heart neither win a blessing for themselves nor for their posterity—they are not among the seed that God has blessed, neither can they be! Oh men and women, if your hearts run here and there, and your aims and desires are scattered like a flock of sheep—running abroad according to their own willfulness—the Good Shepherd will not feed you! When He comes to visit you, He will gather all your desires and aspirations into one fold—and then He will lead you into green pastures and make you to lie down therein. As under the old law men might not sow with mingled seed, nor wear garments of linen and woolen mixed, so neither can those of divided way and heart come into the favor of God.

So I leave the first head when I have noticed that, according to the text, God will give His chosen this unified heart—“I will give them one heart.” Ah, we shall never obtain this blessing other than as a free gift of God’s grace! Teachers may put holy thoughts into our heads, but they cannot alter our hearts. We may unite our thoughts in some system of divinity, but we can never unite our desires upon the divinity, Himself, except we experience a work of grace upon our souls. The one Lord must make our heart one! He who once *made* the heart, must make it *anew* to make it one. “There is one body and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” But none of these seven ones would ever be ours unless it were added, “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ,” and only that grace can make our heart one!

This the Lord does, in part, by enlightenment through the light of His Holy Spirit. He shows us the worthlessness and deceptiveness of everything that would attract our hearts away from Jesus and from our God. And when we see the evil of the rival, we give our heart entirely to Him whom we worship. The Lord works this, also, by a still more thorough process; for He weans us from all idolatrous loves. He makes our carnal delights to become bitter to us, so that we turn aside from them with disgust, even as the Egyptians loathed drinking of the waters of the river which they formerly idolized, for the Lord had turned it into blood. He puts gall upon the breasts of the world and then we look elsewhere for comfort. It takes much to make us cry with David, “My soul is even as a weaned child.” Disease and death are summoned to shoot their fatal arrows at our dearest ones before we will give God the whole of our hearts. It is hard to love the creature much and yet not too much—it is a great thing to love our beloved ones in Christ and in subordination to Christ. Many a mother has had to lose child after child because she had stirred the jealousy of the best Beloved by dividing her heart between Him and her little ones.

Many a man in business has fallen from wealth and prosperity because God saw that His heart went astray after His possessions. Doubtless many have had eloquence, talent and gifts of various kinds—and they doted upon these things until it has been necessary to remove them to unite their hearts upon God, and so they have been laid aside by sickness, or the mind has lost its vigor, or the voice has failed and the gift has become a plague, rather than a comfort—and thus their heart has lost its idol and has turned unto the Lord.

If Christ is married to us, He will have use chaste unto Himself. What would we think of a man who is engaged to a woman and is found spending his love upon another as well? We say he is false and treacherous, and we utterly despise him. He ought to give his heart to her whom he has espoused and to love her with constancy, or he cannot be esteemed a pure-minded man. Even so, in our dealings with the Lord Jesus, we must be watchful lest a single desire or affection should prove false to Him. Such a glorious object of affection must fill the whole horizon of the soul, even as the sun fills all the heavens with his light and the stars are quite forgotten. All the rivers run into the sea and so must all our love run to Jesus. Oh brothers and sisters, shut the gates of your hearts lest any steal away by night from the Lord! The heart must be whole and wholly His. Remember that you may have a great gash in your head and yet you may live. But if but a pin's point should divide your heart, you will die. Ask for divine grace to say with the psalmist, "O God, my heart is fixed." Then, indeed, will you sing and give praise. This is not only important, it is essential! See, my hearers, whether you have received this choice blessing of the covenant of grace, each one for himself—this holy, uniting work of the Spirit of God!

II. If we have this, we may now advance to the second blessing of the covenant here mentioned, which is **CONSISTENCY OF WALK**—"I Will give them one way." When the heart is united, the man lives for a single objective and that alone. Running in one direction, striving for one purpose, he keeps to the one way which leads to heaven. As Christ is our one life, so is He our one way. Without this unity, there can be no truth in a man's life. If he spins by day, and unravels at night, he is acting out a falsehood. If he runs to the right while men look at him, but trudges back, again, to the old post, as soon as men's eyes are taken from him, his life is double-talk—which is but a fine word for a lie! It is a dreadful thing for a man's word to be a lie, but for a man's whole *life* to be a lie is still more horrible. We may have much more of the liar about us than we dream. Let us see to it and pray God, that, like Nathanael, we may have no guile in us. We may patch up our life with bits of religion and remnants of profession till it becomes like the beggar's coat, of which no man knows the original—such a garment may be fit for a beggar—but shall we wear it? The seamless garment of the truth of God, woven from the top throughout, adorns a Christian, but motley raiment proves a man a fool. Unless we follow the Lord with one heart and one way, we shall be found to be liars, after all, and if all liars have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death, what will be his lot whose life was false to itself and false to God? Inconsistency of behavior shows that the truth of God is little set by in the heart.

We must, dear friends, have one walk, or else our life will make no progress. He who travels in two opposite directions will find himself not moving forward. How is it that some professors are at much the same place as they occupied 20 years ago? Years have made them more gray, but not more gracious! At night they fastened up their boat in a little creek of the river and when the tide ran out, they waited and waited until, close to the end of its running—and then they went down a little way with the tide but very soon the stream ceased to turn—and so they drifted back with the flood and hitched up near the same muddy shore as before! Like a pendulum, they travel far, but get no farther! Growth, progress, advancement—none of these can they know, for they are double-minded—and so run to and fro in the earth and wear themselves out with vanity. Multitudes of people are doing this! They make such progress one Sunday that they resolve, from now on, to live unto God. They begin at a steam engine rate! They plow the sea of life in their eagerness—they are like a vessel which has had new boilers put into her! But by tomorrow where are they? They have burst their boilers, or they have allowed the fires to go out—and from now on they are without spiritual life or motion and lie like logs upon the stream. This will not do! We must have one way of uniform vitality. I do not say that we can always make apparent progress at the same *rate*, for powerful under-currents affect our life, and a man may be doing much who is successfully over adverse influences. When a fierce wind is blowing, a captain at the will may be

driven on shore if he does not steam right into the teeth of the hurricane. If he does this, is he not making the surest *real* progress if he manages to stay where he is and avoid the fatal danger? I say, then, that if we do not seem to advance, we may, nevertheless, in the judgment of God, be making true progress if we resist the mighty impulses which would otherwise hurry us on to destruction.

But if we have two ways and steer this way and that way and every way by turns—with the view of pleasing men and making things easy all round—we cannot speed towards the desired haven. We must choose and keep to one way or we cannot attain to usefulness. What influence has a double-minded man? If a man speaks for God, today, and so lives, tomorrow, that he virtually speaks for the devil, what power has he over those around him? How can he lead who has no way of his own? If your actions play fast and loose with truth. If your life is a checkerboard of black and white. If you are everything by turns and nothing long, what force, for good, can you possibly exert? Consistency and unity of life are necessary to usefulness! And I am sure it is necessary for anything like assurance. The best of believers may, through holy anxiety, question their own state, but the man who has two ways may well sing—

*“Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His or am I not?”*

O you who are inconsistent in life, I must be bold to tell you that many of your friends are even more in doubt about you than you are about yourself! ‘Tis a point we also long to know, for we cannot tell whether you love the Lord or no, whether you are His or not! Sometimes we see happy signs about you and our charity hopes all things. But when we see you falling, again, into evil ways, we are distressed and even our charity weeps over you! How can we be assured of your change of heart when we see so little change of *life*? What a pity to lead such a life that it puzzles those who love you best to form any judgment as to your condition! If you were to die as you are, we should not know which way you would go, for your present path is dubious and intricate.

Would you go to heaven or hell? Common judgment would depend upon whether you died in one of your good fits or in one of your bad ones! Is this a pleasant way of putting it? O you who blow hot and cold, you are strange beings! You seem, to the common observer, to be too good for hell and not good enough for heaven! You cannot be divided at the last, and therefore you may rest assured that the powers of evil will seize you as their own! No person can come to any true personal assurance while his life is of a double character. But if I know that I have one heart and that my heart belongs to my Lord—and that I have one way, a way of obedience to Him—then may I be assured that I am His! If I cannot make such progress as I would, yet if I follow my Lord and keep my face steadfastly set towards Jerusalem, then I know where I am, what I am, and where I am going! Holiness of life proves our faith and faith ensures our salvation—and salvation begets joy, peace, and confidence! “Hereby we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments.” A plain way will make our condition plain. This unity of way is a covenant blessing—it comes not *of* man, neither *by* man, but God *gives* it to His own elect as one of the choice favors of His grace—“I will give them one heart and one way.”

III. Briefly we notice, in the third place, the next covenant blessing, STEADFASTNESS OF PRINCIPLE—“That they may fear Me forever.” Get the heart and the way right and then the spiritual force of the fear of God will abide in us in all days to come. Notice the basis of true religion—it is the fear of God—it is not said that they shall join a church, make a profession and speak holy words forever. No, it is that, “They may fear Me forever.” Oh brothers and sisters, our religion must have the Lord in the very heart of it! We must be in constant contact with God and possess in our souls the true fear of God, for as this is the beginning of wisdom, so is it the only security of perseverance!

When God has given us a true spiritual fear of Him, it will abide all tests. Outward religion depends upon the excitement which created it. But the fear of the Lord lives on when all around it is frostbitten. What happens to many converts? The revivalists have gone and they have gone, too. But if God has given us one heart to love and obey Him and His fear is in us, we do not depend upon the mental thermometer! Like salamanders, we can live in the fire—and like seals we can live in Arctic ice. We are not dependent upon special services and warm-hearted exhortations, for we have a springing well within us! We live upon the *Master* and not upon the servants—the Spirit of God does not leave us because certain

good men have gone elsewhere. No, God has given us to fear Him forever. Persecution comes, Christians are ridiculed in the workshop, they are pointed out in the street, and an opprobrious name is hooted at them! Now we shall know who are God's elect, and who are not! Persecution acts as a winnowing fan and those who are light as chaff are driven away by its blast. But those who are true corn remain and are purified. Careless of man's esteem, the truly God-fearing man with one heart holds on his one way and fears the Lord forever! Then, perhaps, comes a more serious test, the trial of prosperity. A man grows rich. He rises into another class of society. If he is not a real Christian, he will forsake the Lord. But if he is a true-born heir of the kingdom of God, he will fear the Lord *forever* and consecrate his substance to Him. A heart wholly given to God will stand the wear and tear of life in all conditions, whether in honor or in contempt.

Poverty is a severe test to many and I have known numbers of professors forsake the house of God because, as they say, their clothes were not fit to come in. That is a poor excuse! I fear their *hearts* were not fit to come in! The fear of God would make the godly man swallow his pride and follow Christ in *rags*—he will bear a famine of bread and a famine of water—but he cannot endure a famine of the Word of God! His soul must be fed, and so he must and *will* be found where the Lord's Table is spread with the bread of heaven. When God stripped Job of all his riches, it was *then* that his integrity was seen and proven. With some of you old age is creeping on, but I rejoice to know that your grace is not decaying! You are becoming deaf; eyesight is failing you, and your limbs are trembling—but you can still hear the voice of the Lord, and behold the beauties of His Word, and run in the ways of His statutes! If God has given the young man one heart and one way, he will fear God forever and will not forsake the Lord when infirmities multiply upon him. He will bring forth fruit in old age, to show that the Lord is upright! If our soul is wholly Christ's, we can never go back to perdition—"Who shall separate us from the love of God?"

The Lord has cast such cords of love about us that He holds us fast! We can lose father and mother, yes, and our own lives, also, but we cannot forsake the Lord whose blood has bought us from the lowest hell! We are bound for the kingdom—who shall keep us out of it? We have been shot like arrows from the bow of God and we must speed onward till we rest in the target of eternal bliss! Oh what a mercy it is to have within us a fear of God which is not to last for a period of years, but forever!

IV. Very hurriedly I mention the next thing, which is PERSONAL BLESSEDNESS, "for the good of them." Where God gives us one heart, one way and steadfast principle, it must be for our good in the highest sense. Tell me, who are the happiest Christians? They will be found to be wholehearted Christians! When heart and life are divided, happiness leaks through the crack. We must be steady in the pursuit of righteousness if we would abide in the enjoyment of peace. Brothers and sisters, if you want to know the sweetness of religion, you must know the depth of it! The foam upon the top of the sacred cup is often bitter, but at the bottom lies the essence of sweetness. I will not say, drink deep, or drink not at all, but I will say this, that those who are content with superficial godliness have no idea of the delights which dwell in the deep places of communion with God! Plunge into the river of life! Let body, soul and spirit be immersed into its floods, and you shall swim in unspeakable joy! Lose sight of the shores of worldliness, and you shall see God's wonders in the deeps! In intense devotion to the Lord you will find the rare jewel, satisfaction. "O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the Lord!" Sweet content never dwells with half-heartedness. This shall be for your good every way—for your guidance in business, for your direction in devotion, for the good of your mind here—for the good of your spirit hereafter. To be endowed by grace with one heart and one way is to be rendered fit to live and fit to die! I am sure if you read the biographies of men, if they are fairly written, you will find that the good, the true, the great, the noble were single-minded.

Those who have the clearest sight of God are the pure in heart and the undivided in heart—and those who enjoy a heaven below are those whose hearts and lives are engrossed with heavenly things. The blessed life is that of fervent love and thorough consecration. Do these things abound among you, brethren? I believe that in this assembly there are more wholehearted Christian men and women than I am likely to meet with in any other gathering. And yet, for all that, I cannot help fearing that even here there are professing Christians who never knew what it was to give their hearts perfectly to God's work, or to the love of Jesus! When these people come to the hour of trouble, they are dispirited and rebellious.

Would it be so if they were perfectly resigned to God's will? These people are often short of spiritual comforts. Would they be short of them if they had made a clean and clear surrender to their God? I believe they would not. Men who will not eat are starved and weak—and many a disease finds soil within them through the weakness of their constitution. But those who feed on Christ, the bread of heaven, are nourished and strong—and are preserved from a thousand ills by that very fact. O God the Holy Spirit, I cannot talk to Christ's servants as I wish to do, but You can move them, now, to aspire after a complete giving up of themselves to You, for this shall be for their good!

V. The last is a RELATIVE BLESSING—"And for their children after them." Wholehearted Christians are usually blessed with posterity of a like kind. Consecrated men and women live to see their children following in their steps. When sons and daughters forsake the ways of godliness, do you wonder when you spy out the home life of their parents? If religion is a sham, do you expect frank young men to respect it? If the father was hollow-hearted in his profession, will not the children despise it? The genuine, thoroughbred Christian is often hated, but he is never the object of contempt. Men may ridicule him and say that he is a fool, but they cannot help admitting that he is happy! And the wiser sorts among them wish that they were such fools, themselves!

Be thorough and true, and your family will respect your faith. The almost inevitable consequence of respect in a child towards his parent is a desire to imitate him. It is not always so, but as a rule it is so. If the parents live unto God in a thorough-hearted way, their sons and daughters aspire to the same thing. They see the beauty of religion at home around the fireside, and their conscience, being quickened, leads them to pray to God that they may have the same piety, so that when they, themselves, commence a household, they may enjoy the same happiness. Certainly if any of you are the children of eminently godly parents, and are living in sin, your parents' lives condemn you! Are they in heaven? Dare you go to their grave and sit upon the grassy hillock and think of how you are living? It will force tears to your eyes to contrast yourself with them! You may well tremble to think that you neglect your mother's Savior, that you forget your father's God! It will go hard with those who leap into hell-fire over a father's prayers and a mother's entreaties—yet some seem desperately resolved on such suicide! I hope these are comparatively few, and that it is still true, "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Temporal and spiritual blessings come upon households where the heads of the family are completely consecrated to God.

Try it! Try it! I will be bound that you will find it profitable! If at the Last Great Day you shall find that consecration to Christ is an error, I will be willing to bear the blame myself! I am not afraid that anyone among you will ever censure me for having excited you into a too fervent zeal, or a too devoted life! Brothers and sisters, I am afraid of those of you who go ankle deep into religion and never venture further—I am afraid lest you should, by-and-by, return to the shore! But as for you who plunge into the center of the stream and find waters to swim in, I have no fears! You shall be borne onward by a current ever increasing in strength till in the ocean of eternal love you lose yourselves in heaven above! I can wish you no greater blessing than that the Holy Spirit may make you wholehearted, consistent, persistent, ardent, established and persevering in the things of God! On you and on your household my heart pronounces this benediction—the Lord give you one heart and one way that you may fear Him forever. Amen.

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